

IN THE CLAIMS

The text of all claims under examination is submitted, and the status of each is identified. This listing of claims replaces all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

1. (currently amended): A method of producing an amide from the corresponding nitrile comprising the following steps,

- i) providing a microorganism capable of producing a nitrile hydratase biocatalyst,
- ~~ii)~~ ii) culturing the microorganism in a growth medium ,
- ~~iii)~~ iii) storing the microorganism,
- ~~iv)~~ iv) contacting the nitrile with the microorganism in an aqueous medium and thereby converting the nitrile to the amide,

wherein the microorganism is stored as a ~~non-actively~~ non-actively growing free cells culture in a storage medium that comprises water and any residual fermentation broth components, and the term non-actively growing culture means that the metabolism in the microorganism cells is substantially zero.

2. (currently amended): A method according to claim 1 in which the microorganism is ~~recovered from~~ stirred up ~~in step iii)~~ the growth medium in the form of as an aqueous paste comprising whole microbial cells.

3. (currently amended): A method according to claim 1 in which the microorganism is ~~recovered from~~ the growth medium and is stored in step iii) as an aqueous suspension of microbial cells in a suspending medium selected from the group consisting of water, physiological saline solution, a physiological buffer solution and an aqueous liquid containing at least one component of the growth medium.

4. (currently amended): A method according to claim 1 in which the microorganism is ~~retained~~ stored in step iii) in the growth medium in step ii).

5. (currently amended): A method according to claim 1 in which the amide is an ethylenically unsaturated amide, ~~preferably acrylamide or methacrylamide.~~

6. (currently amended): A method according to claim 1 in which the ~~components of the growth medium~~ comprised in the storage medium of step iii) comprises ~~includes~~ urea or a urea derivative.

7. (previously presented): A method according to claim 1 in which the microorganism is stored at a temperature above the freezing point of the storage medium.

8. (previously presented); A method according to claim 1 in which the microorganism is stored for a period of at least 2 days.

9. (previously presented): A method according to claim 1 in which the microorganism is of the Rhodococcus genus.

10. (previously presented): A method according to claim 1 in which the microorganism is Rhodococcus rhodochrous NCIMB 41164.

11. (previously presented): A method according to claim 9 in which the microorganism is of the Rhodococcus rhodochrous species.

12. (new): A method of producing an amide from the corresponding nitrile comprising the following steps,

- i.) providing a microorganism capable of producing a nitrile hydratase biocatalyst,
- ii.) culturing the microorganism in a growth medium ,
- iii.) storing the microorganism,
- iv.) contacting the nitrile with the microorganism in an aqueous medium and thereby converting the nitrile to the amide,

wherein the microorganism is stored as a non-actively growing culture in a storage medium that comprises water, either as an aqueous paste comprising whole microbial cells or as an aqueous suspension of microbial cells in a suspension medium selected from the group consisting of water and an aqueous liquid containing at least one component of the growth medium or the microorganism is stored in the growth medium, and the term non-actively growing culture means that the metabolism in the microorganism cells is substantially zero.